

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
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AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 9163

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, PINR, AF, UR
SUBJ: AFGHAN LEADERSHIP UNDERSCORES TIES TO USSR

REF: KABUL 9145

1. SUMMARY: THE CURRENT CORDIALITY IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN (DRA) AND THE SOVIET UNION WAS DRAMATICALLY MANIFESTED IN THE ATTENDANCE OF PRESIDENT TARAKI AND ALL MEMBERS OF THE POLITBUREAU AND THE CABINET AT THE SOVIET EMBASSY'S NOVEMBER 7 RECEPTION AND THE PRESS ATTENTION GIVEN THIS. ALTHOUGH FOREIGN MINISTER HAFIZULLAH AMIN CONSPICUOUSLY ARRIVED AND DEPARTED WITH TARAKI, IT WAS TARAKI WHO WAS THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF ATTENTION. NEVERTHELESS, JUDGING FROM AMIN'S CONSTANT PROXIMITY TO TARAKI AND THE DEFERENCE SHOWN TO BOTH TARAKI AND AMIN, ONE IS INELUCTABLY LED TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE LEADERSHIP OF THE NEW REGIME REMAINS IN THE HANDS OF THESE TWO MEN. THE BLATANT DEMONSTRATION OF FRIENDSHIP FOR THE SOVIET UNION IS LIKELY MORE THAN SYMBOLIC. CONCERNED BY CONTINUED DISTURBANCES IN THE TRIBAL AREAS AND BY ALLEGED EVIDENCE THAT ANTI-DRA ELEMENTS ARE BEING ASSISTED
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FROM THE OUTSIDE, THE NEW REGIME MAY FEEL ACUTELY THAT IT IS THREATENED AND THAT IT MUST, THEREFORE, RELY ON THE SOVIET UNION AS ITS ULTIMATE PROTECTOR. WHETHER THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP WELCOMES SUCH A BURDEN BEING PLACED UPON IT CAN PERHAPS BE ANSWERED BETTER IN MOSCOW THAN HERE. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT TARAKI, MEMBERS OF THE POLITBUREAU AND CABINET

AND CHIEFS OF MISSION OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS WERE RECEIVED AND ENTERTAINED IN A ROOM SEPARATE FROM THE REMAINDER OF THE GUESTS. THE HIGHEST RANKING SOVIET GUEST WAS SERGEY FEDOROVICH, SOVIET MINISTER OF THE MEAT AND DAIRY INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE SOVIET-AFGHAN FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY. TARAKI, ALTHOUGH A BIT TIRED LOOKING, PARTICIPATED FULLY IN THE DISCUSSIONS WHICH TOOK PLACE BETWEEN HIS AFGHAN COLLEAGUES AND THE SOVIETS DURING THE ENTIRE HOUR AND A HALF THAT HE AND AMIN ATTENDED THE RECEPTION. MEMBERS OF HIS CABINET WHO CONGREGATED THE CLOSEST AROUND TARAKI WERE: HAFIZULLAH AMIN, DR. SHSH WALI (MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH), ABDUL KARIM MISAQ (MINISTER OF FINANCE), ABDUL JAUZJANI (MINISTER OF JUSTICE, AND DR. SALEH MOHAMMAD ZIRI (MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE). ALTHOUGH RUMORS PERSIST THAT DASTAGIR PANJSHIRI, (MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS), SULAIMAN LAIQ (MINISTER OF RADIO AND TELEVISION), AND MOHAMMAD HASSAN BAREQ SHAFEYE (MINISTER OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION) ARE ON THE SKIDS, THEY WERE ALSO PRESENT AND ON SEEMINGLY GOOD TERMS WITH THEIR CABINET COLLEAGUES. THE ENTIRE CABINET SEEMED TO BE RELAXED AND IN GOOD SPIRITS, WITH MOST ENJOYING THE UNENDING SUPPLY OF VODKA AND FOOD WHICH WERE SERVED.

3. DURING THE RECEPTION, SOVIET AMBASSADOR PUZANOV MADE IT A POINT TO INTRODUCE HIS COLLEAGUES FROM EASTERN EUROPE TO TARAKI. WHEN IT APPEARED THAT ALL FOREIGN AMBASSADORS PRESENT WOULD BE CALLED UPON TO TOAST TARAKI, CHINESE AMBASSADOR
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HUANG MING-TA URGED ME TO JOIN THE LINE. SINCE I HAD ALREADY GREETED PRESIDENT TARAKI UPON HIS ARRIVAL, I SIMPLY SAID THAT I WOULD BE HAPPY TO FOLLOW MY SENIOR COLLEAGUE, THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR. HUANG MING-TA GAVE ME A SERIOUS LOOK AND WITH A DEGREE OF AGITATION SAID, "FOR WHAT PURPOSE SHOULD I TOAST THE PRESIDENT, AND WHAT COULD I SAY?". IT WAS EVIDENT THAT HE HAS NO LOVE FOR THE PRESENT REGIME AND FINDS THE CLOSENESS OF THE AFGHAN-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP DISQUIETING. (IT ENDED UP THAT NEITHER ONE OF US WAS CALLED UPON TO TOAST TARAKI.)

4. SECURITY ALONG THE ROUGHLY THREE-MILE ROUTE FROM THE CENTER OF TOWN TO THE SOVIET EMBASSY WAS VERY TIGHT. ARMED SOLDIERS WERE SPACED ALONG EITHER SIDE OF THE ROAD ABOUT EVERY 20-30 YARDS. TRAFFIC ALONG THE ROUTE TO THE EMBASSY WAS STRICTLY CONTROLLED.

5. COMMENT: WHILE THE MEMBERS OF THE POLITBUREAU AND CABINET APPEARED RELAXED AND CONVIVIAL, RUMORS PERSIST THAT THERE IS RESENTMENT WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP REGARDING AMIN'S HIGH-HANDED BEHAVIOR. I DO NOT DISCOUNT THESE RUMORS OR IGNORE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE APPEARANCE OF THE ENTIRE CABINET HEADED BY TARAKI WAS DESIGNED TO CONVEY A PUBLIC IMAGE OF

UNITY AND COHESIVENESS. THE OUTWARD SHOW OF CLOSENESS TO THE SOVIETS WAS PROBABLY MORE THAN SYMBOLIC. ONGOING DISTURBANCES IN THE TRIBAL AREAS AND ELSEWHERE COMBINED WITH THE BELIEF THAT OUTSIDE FORCES ARE ASSISTING ELEMENTS INTENT UPON SUBVERTING THE KHALQI REGIME, HAVE PERHAPS LED THIS REGIME TO CONCLUDE THAT ITS FUTURE MAY NOT BE ENTIRELY ASSURED. FROM THE VIEW-POINT OF TARAQI AND AMIN, THE SOVIET UNION IS LIKELY SEEN NOT ONLY AS A SOURCE OF ECONOMIC, MILITARY AND MORAL SUPPORT, BUT AS A POWER WHICH WOULD PROTECT AND EVEN DEFEND THIS "PROLETARIAN REGIME" IN THE EVENT ITS EXISTENCE IS ACUTELY THREATENED. IT IS, OTHERWISE, DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN WHY TARAQI AND HIS ASSOCIATES SHOULD HAVE MADE SUCH A PUBLIC DISPLAY OF THEIR FRIENDSHIP OR WHY AMIN SHOULD HAVE SUNG SUCH HIGH PRAISES OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION IN HIS SPEECH OF NOVEMBER 7. INTERNALLY, SUCH

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BEHAVIOR AND CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE SOVIETS WOULD ONLY DEEPEN SUSPICIONS AMONG THE POPULATION THAT THE NEW REGIME IS BENT UPON PURSUING A SOCIALIST OR COMMUNIST COURSE AND THEREFORE STRENGTHEN THE DETERMINATION TO RESIST. PRESUMABLY, THIS RISK WAS WORTH TAKING IN AN EFFORT TO CONVINCE THE SOVIETS TO DEFEND THE NEW REGIME IF THE THREAT TO ITS EXISTENCE MATERIALIZES. A SIDE BENEFIT TO THIS MANIFESTATION OF FRIENDSHIP, PARTICULARLY BY TARAQI AND AMIN, MIGHT WELL BE TO CONVINCE THE SOVIETS THAT THEIR TRUE FRIENDS ARE PRESENTLY IN POWER AND THAT THERE IS, THEREFORE, NO REASON TO CONSIDER THE EXILED PARHAMISTS AS AN ALTERNATIVE SHOULD THE PRESENT GROUP SOMEHOW FALTER GRIEVOUSLY FROM THE SOVIET PERSPECTIVE. WE HAVE NO INDICATION THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE SUCH A POSSIBILITY IN MIND -- EXCEPT FOR THE LOGIC OF IT -- BUT TARAQI AND AMIN MAY BELIEVE THIS TO BE A FUTURE POSSIBILITY. FINALLY, IF THERE IS RESENTMENT OF AMIN'S ARBITRARINESS AMONG SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES, HE MAY WELL HAVE BEEN EAGER THROUGH HIS EFFUSIVE SPEECH OF NOVEMBER 7 (REFTEL) TO UNDERSCORE HIS ATTACHMENT TO THE SOVIET UNION TO ENSURE MOSCOW'S SUPPORT AS THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER AND POSITION CONTINUES WITH AFGHANISTAN'S CURRENT LEADERSHIP.

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